CHAPTER 25
REAR GUARD
LOOK, SENSEI.
THE SHINSEN-GUMI HEAD-QUARTERS LOOKS LIKE A BEEHIVE THAT'S BEEN SHAKEN UP.
DOES-N'T IT?
HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL?
.....

DON'T YOU THINK SO, TOO?
IT MUST BE TRUE, OR YOU'D BE WITH THE SHINSENGUMI NOW...
EVEN IF THE OUTCOME IS THE SAME, IT'S ALL THAT'S LEAD UP TO IT THAT MAKES IT SPECIAL... THE FEELING IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT, ISN'T IT?
IT FEELS GOOO TO BE THE ANTAGONIST ...
YOU'VE BETRAYED ALLLLL OF YOUR LITTLE FRIENDS~
DOESN'T IT FEEL WONDERFUL TO WATCH FROM UP HERE?
IT'S OKAY!
JUST FORGET THE BAD STUFF AND LIVE WITHOUT REGRETS!

MAYBE... YOU
OF GHOST...
IT LOOKS
BE DEAD...
TOUDOU WILL COME
BE FRIENDS AGAIN...
DID I
NOW!...
LISTEN TO
EARS AGO...
TOMORRO
S ABOUT...
TOMO
AN DO...
YOU
...

SO?

THAT THINGS WILL GET BETTER!
JUST TRY TO SMILE AND BELIEVE
...

HOW DOES IT FEEL?

KIKU-CHI!
GET DOWN !!
!?
UWA-AAH !!
DIE !!
DO

NAGA-
KURA-
TAI-
CHOU
!!
Y...
YES,
SIR!
YOU'RE
THE ONLY
ONE LEFT...
COME ON,
LET'S GO!
...
SHIT.

IS THE BASE ON FIRE?
SHIT, WHAT'S GOING ON...
ARE YOU AL-RIGHT!?
!! KIKU CHI!
UGH ...

HEY, YOU'VE GOT TO BE KID-DING, SHIN-PATTSAN!
SOMEBODY GO ON THE ROOF AND LOOK FOR A CLEAR WAY OUT.
BUT WE CAN'T STAY HERE AT ABURAK-OUJI EITHER.
IF IT IS, WE CAN'T GO BACK THERE TONIGHT.

THOSE GUYS WANT US DEAD.
WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH MEN TO HOLD OUT UNTIL MORNING.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S JOKING, SANO.
WON'T IT BE EASIER JUST TO KILL ANY-BODY WHO TRIES TO GET IN?
THIS RUN-DOWN PLACE IS COM-PLETELY SUR-ROUNDED.

IF WE ESCAPE DOWN A ARROW, WINDING STREET, I THINK WE CAN LOSE THEM.
SANO, MAKE US AN OPENING.
I'LL BRING UP THE REAR.

HEY... SHIN-PACHI ...
TAI-CHOU!!
I'M SORRY, BUT I OBJECT!

RUNNING AWAY IS AGAINST THE HONOR OF THE SAMURAI !!
I'LL STAY HERE AND FIGHT!
I AM PRE-PARED TO DIE !!
WE'RE SOLDIERS WHO WOULD GIVE OUR LIVES TO DEFEND YOU!

NA-GAKU-RA-TAI-CHOU!?
WHAT!?
"HONOR" AND "RULES" ARE PART OF THE SHINSEN-GUMI!
BUT IF WE DIE, THE SHINSEN-GUMI DIES TOO!!
LIVING TO PROTECT THE SHIN-SENGUMI IS MORE IM-PORTANT THAN SAMURAI PRIDE!!
DON'T GIVE YOUR KYO-KUCHOU AND FUKUCHOU ONE MORE PERSON TO MOURN!!
RULES AREN'T WORTH KILL-ING YOUR-SELVES OVER!!

NAGA-KURA-SENSEI...
TAI-CHOU...

I DON'T WANT TO SEE...
A SINGLE ONE OF YOU DIE.

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WELL THIS IS GONNA BE FUN. JUST PROMISE ME...
YEAH.
...THEY'LL BE CALLING FOR US SOON.

THAT YOU'LL FIND SOME WAY TO LIVE.

I THINK WE OUGHTA KILL ALL OF THOSE AIZU BASTARDS.
LET'S START WITH THE SICK AND WOUND-ED ONES.

AH..

I FOUND SOMETHING FOR US TO PLAY WITH.

HOW'S THIS? HOW ABOUT WE HAVE SOME FUN INSIDE?
WHY NOT? THE GUYS OUTSIDE SURE ARE!

COUGH
COUGH
COUGH
COUGH
COUGH
COUGH

OOH, YOU POOR THING, THAT LOOKS LIKE IT MUST HURT!
BUT WE'LL MAKE YOU FEEL ALLLLL BETTER~~!

...FILTHY.
……
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ゴッ
FILTHY..
FILTHY.

STEP
STEP
STEP
YOU... YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD!!
THAT MUST BE OKITA SOUJI !!
AIIIIEEE!! HE'S COMING!!

COUGH
COUGH
COUGH
COUGH

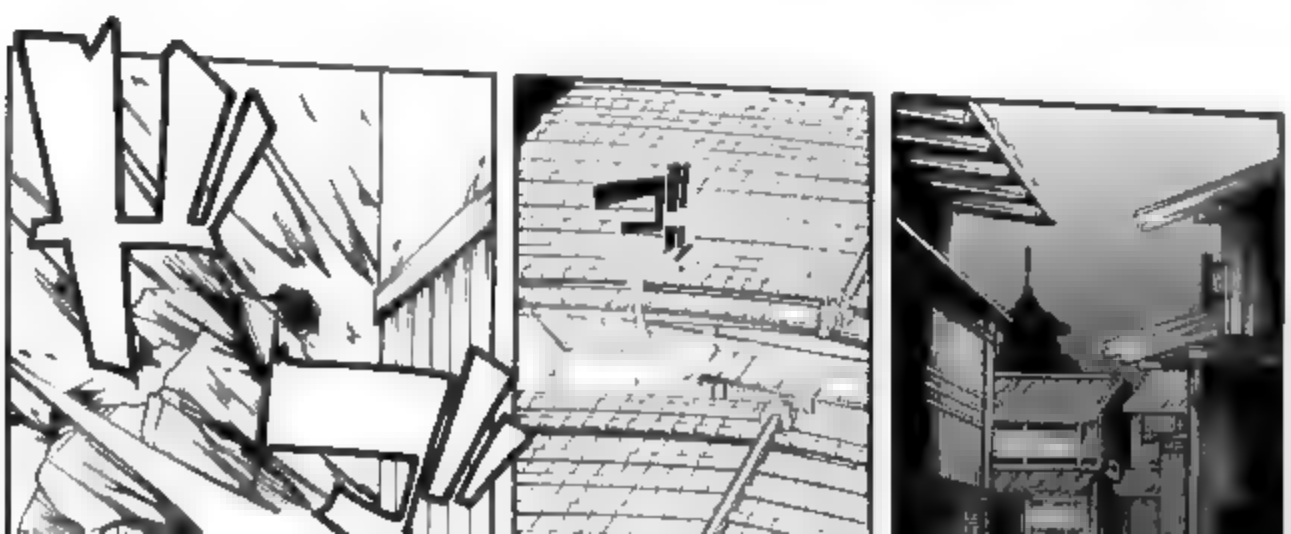
"FWOOSH"
RUN!
HE
HE
HE'S A GHOST !!

OKITA-SAN
OKITA-SAN.
YOU CAN'T GO.

.....
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU CAN DO WITH THAT BODY?
PLEASE LET ME GO.
YOU CAN'T GO. PLEASE RETURN TO YOUR ROOM.
...PLEASE LET ME GO.
PLEASE LET ME GO.
LET ME GO...!!
LET ME GO!

...YOU OUGHT TO KNOW YOUR OWN LIMITS

IF YOU CAN LIVE EVEN ONE MORE DAY...
I WILL FORCE YOU TO KEEP BREATHING...!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AAAAA!
UWAAA!
WOW!!
HE'S AMAZING!!
ALRIGHT, IT'S CLEAR, NOW LET THESE CHICKENS OUT OF THE COOP!!!

...MORE LIKE SIX.
HE'S BREAK-ING THROUG H THE THIRD POINT EASILY!!
EIGHT, NO, NINE!!
WELL, WHAT-EVER
WE'RE JUST HERE TO WATCH.
..
THE REAR GUARD
..
?
THAT SHORT GUY IS BRINGING UP THE REAR, RIGHT?

THAT'S THE REAR GUARD..?
THE REAR GUARD
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"CREAK"
"DRIP"

"GRAB"
"SWISH"

I CAN'T DO IT, SHIN-PATTSAN.
IT'S STUCK.
SO AM I DEAD NOW?
I DUNNO, ARE YOU DEAD?
AH, YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED
ALWAYS GOING EASY ON ME. THAT'S MY SHINPATTSAN.
I GUESS YOU KILLED THESE GUYS, HUH?
.....
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BUT I DON'T MIND IF YOU KILL ME.
WELL...
.....
OH.
THIS ISN'T AN ATTACK.
I'M HERE ALONE.
.....!
SANO AND THE REST GOT OUT.
BUT THEY'RE SURROUNDED NOW. EVERYTHING'S ALL GONE TO HELL.
...I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE YOU LIKE THIS.
WHEN I JOINED THE GORYOWEJI, I THOUGHT I COULD SEPA-RATE MYSELF FROM YOU.
I WISH I HAD NEVER LEFT YOU AND SANO.
...HEY.
COME ON, I KNOW A SAFE WAY OUT.
YOU SHOULD GO. IT'S DANG-EROUS.

YOU KNEW ALL ABOUT THIS DAMNED PLOT, AND YOU DIDN'T SAY A THING?
YOU THINK I'M GOING TO BELIEVE A WORD YOU SAY?
.....
WHATEVER.
DO WHATEVER YOU WANT, SHINPATTSAN.

POST SCRIPT

I KNOW IT'S UNFORGIVABLY CRUEL, BUT "PEACEMAKER KUROGANE" WILL GO ON HIATUS FROM HERE ON.

AFTER I TAKE SOME TIME TO RECHARGE MY ENERGY, EXAMINE MY WORK AND REVIEW MY OPTIONS, I'D LIKE TO RESUME THE SERIES.

ALTHOUGH I DON'T KNOW WHEN THIS WILL BE, I INTEND TO CONTINUE AND I LOOK FORWARD TO WHEN I CAN DO SO.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

-NANAE CHRONO